



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. -

Matthew 15:9

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Controlling Others and Useless Worship

Why is it that nearly every organized religion ends up worshipping “in vain”? Why do they get so caught up in controlling their members that they can't leave them free to follow God, or even grant them the freedom God grants to every human being?

The answer lies at the crux of what it means to be human. And the answers tell us much about the sinful human race and very little if anything about the God those religions profess to serve. What I'm saying is that every organized religion is run by humans and it will, over time, succumb to the faults and failings of the humans who run it.

To really understand the fallen human we have to understand the design of the unfallen human. Our basic design didn't change, our characters merely became corrupted with ideas and thinking patterns that are incompatible with the way we were designed to operate and, ultimately, with life itself.

The first important truth about the original design for humanity is that we were designed to be free. God made us to have “dominion” over the rest of the planet. We are the superior life form on this planet, and God intended us to oversee the rest of life and to tend the planet he had created for us and for them.

One important principle of life that is totally foreign to modern human experience can be inferred from what the Bible tells us about angels. First, the Bible says humans were created “a little lower than the angels.” But it also tells us that the angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who would be heirs of salvation—that is, humans. Jesus himself told his disciples that no student is greater than his teacher. But then he said that he came to serve, not to be served.

In the rest of the universe (only here on this earth is this not understood) the greater always serve the lesser. If, as some suggest, humans will be recreated

to be a little higher than the angels at the end of the age, then after that transformation it will be our joy to serve the angels who spent so long serving us when they were greater than us.

So God created man as the superior life form on earth, meaning we are designed to serve all other life forms. When sin entered, that got turned on its head, and modern humans think the rest of life on the planet is here to serve us. Of course what they do in reality when they think that way is to set the animals higher than themselves!

It would have been our responsibility to be sure that the rest of the creatures on this planet never had a reason to be afraid. In our modern age humans are the thing most species of animals are most afraid of. So we're doing the opposite of what we were supposed to do. No wonder the earth works so poorly!

But God also designed us to control something. That must be clear from the near universal desire of humans to control someone else. Of course God didn't make us to control each other. So why did he give us this need to control? Because he intended us to control ourselves. But once the selfishness that is part of sin warped our characters we lost the concept of controlling ourselves and began reaching out to control others seeking to meet the need for control that God gave us.

Now you take such a control-addicted human and put him in control of religion. What do you think he (or she) is going to do? You guessed it. Humans see religion as a list of rules to keep to assure ethical behavior. Most people, if you asked, would tell you that ethics is a major duty of religion in our society. Remember the harlot and her adultery with the kings of the earth?

So do you want to feel superior to others? Then serve them. The greater always serve the lesser, so everyone you serve becomes lesser than you. The more people you serve the greater you become. If only the people who lead religions could grasp that simple concept! Instead of trying to control what people believe and how they behave, they would assert their superiority by serving. What a concept! Or was that what Jesus kept trying to get across to his disciples?

Happy Sabbath to all,

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